

BEGINNING LEG EXERCISES

SEATED HEEL RAISES

Heel raises strengthen lower leg muscles, important for sway control. Stronger calf muscles can put a little extra oomph into the push-off phase of gait.

Benefits »

- Strengthens calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus).
- Enhances postural control for balance and gait.
- Allows participants to do a seated strength activity.

Set It Up »

You will not need any special equipment for this exercise. One progression has participants seated on a balance disc in a chair with arms.

How to Do It »

The Start

Participants start in the tall sitting position, with shoulders over hips, chin level, head retracted, and feet flat on the floor. Abs are pulled in and up slightly. The ribs are lifted and torso tall, lengthening the spine.

The Moves

Use the following cues.

- Lift both heels off the floor 3 to 5 inches (8-13 centimeters), as able. Balls of the feet should stay on the floor.
- Hold a moment.
- Return heels to the floor. Relax.
- Repeat 10 to 15 times, as tolerated.
- Stretch the calves when done (flex the ankle and turn the foot from side to side).



Take It Further »

- Lift both heels in stages.
 - Lift to balls of feet.
 - Lift to tip toes.
 - Push both heels forward so that they are almost over the toes and pressure is felt along the longitudinal axis of the foot.
 - Hold a moment and then return heels to the floor.
- Add a Thera-Band.
 - Place heels on the floor with toes up.
 - Place the middle part of Thera-Band under balls of feet. Hold the two ends in your hands. (Participants can adjust the resistance from here.)
 - Push the toes down against the band, toward the floor.

- ⦿ Add additional weight to one leg.
 - Place both hands on one knee and lean the body forward to add weight to the heel raises of that leg.
 - Then add weight to other leg and do heel raises with that foot.

Give It More Balance »

- ⦿ Alternate heels; this will help improve agility and coordination.
- ⦿ Slide to the front of the chair and maintain a tall sitting posture throughout the exercise.
- ⦿ Sit on a balance disc (*only* if the chairs have arms).